

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 1, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 23, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 716

Introduced by Assembly Member Huber

February 26, 2009

An act to add Section 722 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 716, as amended, Huber. Veteran services: state agencies and departments.

Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to veterans.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs ~~establish a veteran data exchange system and enter into memorandums of understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies and departments, as specified, to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments, as provided. This bill would require each state agency and department that provides services, benefits, or assistance to veterans to identify the services, benefits, or assistance that are being provided and the number of veterans who are using those services, benefits, or assistance and to submit a report to the Legislature, as provided the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect specified information from individuals that identify themselves as veterans, and to transmit this information, as provided, to the Department of Veterans Affairs so that~~

the department may notify these veterans about state and federal benefits and other veteran programs and services for which the veterans may be eligible.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 722 is added to the Military and Veterans
2 Code, to read:

3 722. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

4 (1) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs spent
5 ~~\$6.1 billion in California in federal fiscal year 2006, \$2.66 billion~~
6 ~~of which was for disability payments to veterans. These disability~~
7 ~~\$7.1 billion in California in federal fiscal year 2008, \$3.1 billion~~
8 ~~of which was for compensation and pension payments to veterans.~~
9 *These compensation and pension payments are directly paid to*
10 *veterans and generate a significant contribution to California's*
11 *economy.*

12 (2) Unfortunately, only approximately 11 percent of veterans
13 who are eligible in California participate in these programs.
14 California ranks 38th nationally in terms of participation rates. On
15 a per capita basis, Texas and Florida collect 44 percent and 31
16 percent more respectively in disability benefits than California.
17 This difference is primarily due to Texas and Florida having more
18 veterans' services representatives available to assist veterans in
19 pursuing benefit claims.

20 (3) It is estimated that if California could increase the
21 participation rate to the national average of slightly over 12 percent,
22 over \$330 million more could be returned to the state and local
23 economy and paid to our resident veterans who need that money
24 to support themselves and their families.

25 (4) County veteran service officers and veterans service
26 organizations have assumed the primary responsibility to assist
27 veterans in accessing these federal benefits, but the funding for
28 this valuable service is scarce. Consequently, the California
29 Department of Veterans Affairs and other state agencies and
30 departments, as well as local government agencies, that come into
31 regular contact with veterans and National Guard members
32 returning from deployment must do a better job informing resident

1 veterans and their dependents of their eligibility for these benefits
2 so that veterans and their dependents can enroll and begin the
3 application process sooner.

4 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the department ~~establish~~
5 ~~a veteran data exchange system and enter into memorandums of~~
6 understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies
7 or departments, *as selected by the department*, to ascertain the
8 veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or
9 assistance from those state agencies and departments.

10 ~~(c) Each state agency and department that provides services,~~
11 ~~benefits, or assistance to veterans shall identify the services,~~
12 ~~benefits, or assistance that are being provided and the number of~~
13 ~~veterans who are using those services, benefits, or assistance, and~~
14 ~~shall submit this information in a report to the Legislature on or~~
15 ~~before July 1, 2010.~~

16 (c) (1) *The Employment Development Department and the*
17 *Department of Motor Vehicles shall collect the name, address,*
18 *telephone number, and e-mail address, if available, of individuals*
19 *that identify themselves as veterans.*

20 (2) *The information specified in paragraph (1) shall be*
21 *transmitted to the department on a quarterly basis, so that the*
22 *department may notify these veterans about state and federal*
23 *benefits and other veteran programs and services for which the*
24 *veterans may be eligible.*

25 (3) *The Employment Development Department and the*
26 *Department of Motor Vehicles shall notify the veterans that they*
27 *are collecting the information for the purpose specified in*
28 *paragraph (2).*